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The responses of a laboratory subject (S) to a counselor-accomplice and to the psychological treatment situation are examined by manipulating experimentally interpersonal attraction and communication discrepancy. Four treatment conditions were set up: (1) topic similarity and positive attraction for counselor, (2) topic discrepancy and positive attraction, (3) topic similarity and negative attraction, and (4) topic discrepancy and negative attraction. Each of three counselor accomplices saw 24 undergraduate volunteer Ss: six Ss in each of the four treatment conditions. Topic discrepancy and similarity were obtained from the Ss-ranking of nine discussion topics in the order of preference. Ss evaluative attitudes about counselor helpfulness were obtained from a 13 point rating scale. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied to the data. The major finding suggests that response to his counselor's influence attempt depends both upon his attraction toward the counselor and upon the congruency between the expectations of the counselor and the subject about discussion topics. (PS)

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Attraction, Discrepancy and Responses to Psychological Treatment*

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ATTRACTION, DISCREPANCY, AND RESPONSES TO PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT[1]

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In this study, the label counseling refers to an encounter between persons that can be construed and analyzed as a particular instance of the social influence process (Brown, 1965; Secord & Backman, 1964). The specific form of social influence with which this research deals is labeled psychological treatment, a situation that includes events commonly found in counseling. As intended by Pepinsky (1966), psychological treatment is defined in the following manner: any situation in which one or more persons (A) attempt to modify the beliefs or behavior of one or more other persons (B) so as to make B more productive in A's view. In turn, productivity may be defined and inferred to have been accomplished by B, if, in A's view, B has acted to reduce the discrepancy between an observed and a valued state of affairs.

Hence the study was designed to examine the responses of a laboratory subject (S) to a counselor-accomplice and to the psychological treatment situation by mainpulating experimentally interpersonal attraction and communication discrepancy. These conditions as properties of the laboratory and as likely events in an actual counseling situation were treated as antecedent to a counselor-accomplice's attempts to induce an S to prefer certain topics for discussion. Predictions about their effects upon a laboratory S were derived by modifying some of Newcomb's (1953, 1961) and Sampson and Insko's (1964) notions about the principle of cognitive consistency.

Newcomb's (1953) ABX model of cognitive balance presupposes that persons are motivated to maintain congruence among their cognitions about the world. Two elements of an iterpersonal relationship that mediate balance are interpersonal

attraction (i.e., reciprocated liking among group members) and the evaluative attitudes of group members toward objects of common and important relevance. According to Newcomb (1953), persons strive for balance by maintaining a similarity of evaluation between themselves and persons they like, or a dissimilarity of evaluations between themselves and persons they dislike. This suggests that under conditions of imbalance a person will act to change one or the other of these two elements toward a balance or consistency of relationships.

It is necessary, therefore, to specify for this experiment under what conditions of communication discrepancy and interpersonal attraction S might act to maintain "balance" when the counselor tries to induce him to prefer certain problem areas for discussion. Assuming that the attraction of the S toward the counselor, S's perception of the counselor's attraction to him, the counselor's preferences for certain discussion topics, and S's perception of the counselor's expressed preferences are all held constant, the change S makes in attempting to achieve balance should be expected to occur in his own discussion topic preferences. Under conditions of imbalance S should make more change when there is similarity between his topic preferences and those of a disliked counselor, or when there is dissimilarity between himself and a liked counselor. Conversely, S should make less change under conditions of balance where S likes the counselor and their preferences are similar, or where S dislikes the counselor and their preferences are dissimilar. These statements detail expected events in four treatment conditions: (1) topic similarity/positive attraction; (2) topic discrepancy/positive attraction; (3) topic similarity/negative attraction; (4) topic discrepancy/negative attraction.

More specifically, it was predicted that S's change in discussion topic preferences will be associated with a significant interaction between the

effects of discussion topic and attraction. It was also predicted that the direction of S's change in topic preferences will be toward increasing similarity between his and the preferences of a liked counselor-accomplice, or toward increasing dissimilarity between his and the preferences of a disliked counselor-accomplice. In this case, a significant main effect of attraction was expected. Finally, it was predicted that attraction, as a main effect, will be associated significanly with S's rating of his willingness to have the accomplice for a real counselor, and his evaluation of the counselor-accomplice's helpfulness.

In an intake interview made to correspond to an actual counseling situation, 72 male undergraduate volunteer Ss were exposed to two experimental manipulations: (1) the prior induction, by the E, of a set to be positively or negatively attracted to a counselor-accomplice, and (2) an interview with one of three counselor-accomplices who attempted to induce each S to prefer discussion topics that were, by prior determination, made to be similar to or discrepant from the S's own preferences. Eighteen Ss were run in each of four treatment conditions: (1) topic similarity -- positive attraction, (2) topic discrepancy -- positive attraction, (3) topic similarity -- negative attraction, (4) topic discrepancy - negative attraction. Each counselor-accomplice saw 24 Ss, 6 in each condition.

Scores indicating which topics the S most and least preferred as areas of discussion with a counselor were obtained from his preferential ordering of a list of nine discussion topics. Prior to and following his encounter with the counselor, the S ranked these topics from most to least preferred, i. e., from 1 through 9. The amount and direction of change scores were obtained from this measurement procedure.[3] Scores indicating the S's evaluative attitudes about

the counselor's helpfulness, and the S's willingness to have the accomplice for a real counselor were obtained from the S's responses to appropriate items, each rated on a thirteen-point scale. Three graduate student Ph.D. candidates in Counseling Psychology acted as accomplices. The sequence of experimental procedures begain when the E met each S in a reception area, administered the initial topic preference list, and then escorted him to the interviewing room where the E, according to random assignment, induced the positive or negative attraction set. To check the validity of this manipulation, the S's response to an item that asked how much he thought he would like the counselor was obtained. Next, the E left the room returned with the counselor-accomplice who had been briefed about whether he was to act as if he liked or disliked the S, and the topics he was to advocate. The E then introduced the participants to each other, leaving them alone for a 30 minute interview that the E monitored, with the S's permission, from an adjacent observation room. Following the interview, the E returned to administer the final topic preference list and the post-interview attitude scales that included a second check on the validity of the counselor's confirmation of the appropriate attraction set that had been induced by the E. The S's participation concluded after the E debriefed him explaining the purpose of the study and the nature of the deceptions employed.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) computer program (Clyde, Cramer and Sherin, 1966) was used to examine the predicted effects of the experimental treatments and also to examine the possible effects of both the counselor-accomplices and the presentation order of the two classes of dependent measures.[2]

The design used for the statistical analyses was therefore a 2 x 2 x 3 x 2 factorial. The experimental and control manipulations and the number of sub-

jects exposed to each are reported in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here
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Results

Data from the first procedural check on the induction of the attraction sets prior to the interview indicated a significant difference between the mean rating of Ss in the positive and in negative conditions (i.e., $t = 7.98$, $p < .01$) on the item that asked the S how inclined he was to like the counselor-accomplice.

Providing support for the first prediction, the Ss under conditions of topic discrepancy-positive attraction and topic similarity-negative attraction changed their preferences more than the Ss under the two balanced condition (see Table 2, Analysis No. 2), as evidenced by a significant interaction effect between the

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Place Table 2 about here
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discussion topic and attraction factors. Notably, in mediating the S's change in topic preferences, counselor expertise may have served to accentuate the predicted effects of positive attraction in the topic discrepancy condition. For these conditions, balance theory does not anticipate the amount of change that occured.

Amount of topic preference change also proved to be associated with a significant interaction between the counselor and order factors (see Table 2, Analysis 2). It was noted that for counselor No. 1, there was less change under the first presentation order than under the second, whereas for counselors No. 2 and 3 the opposite is true.

Only partial support was gained for the prediction that the S would rank his

final preferences so as to be similar to a liked counselor and dissimilar from a disliked counselor. A four-way interaction among all the design factors proved to be associated significantly with this measure (see Table 1, Analysis 1). Attraction toward the counselor is related to whether the S ranked his final preferences as either similar to or dissimilar from the counselor's, but in doing so it seems he was responsive to the other experimental conditions as well.

The sizeable intercorrelations among scores on the S's evaluation of the counselor's helpfulness, on the S's willingness to have the accomplice for a real counselor and on the S's rating of how much he liked the counselor were such that treating them as separate measures and making predictions about each was unnecessary. The attraction variable as a main effect was associated significantly with all three measures, but it appears that each of them is a measure of the S's liking for the counselor (see Table 1, Analyses 3 and 4). The interaction between the discussion topic and presentation order factors did prove to be associated with scores on the measure of the S's evaluation of the counselor's helpfulness (See Table 1, Analysis 3). When the Ss responded under the topic similarity condition and order No. 1, or under the similar condition and order No. 2, they evaluated the counselor as more helpful than under conditions of dissimilarity and order No. 1, or similarity and order No. 2. The counselor factor was also associated significantly with the Ss scores on the measure of "helpfulness" and liking for the counselor.

The interpretive sense to be made of these last analyses bears on the rather straightforward effects of both attraction and the differential impact of the counselor's upon the S's evaluative responses to the counselor. On a thirteen-point scale, the mean rating of the S's liking for the counselor was 10.81 under positive attraction, and 4.58 under negative attraction. This significant

difference clearly suggests that the counselor-accomplices were able to manage their impressions in accord with the experimental situation because the Ss responded as if interacting with the counselor had confirmed and sustained the expectancy induced by E prior to the interview. It is also notable that without detracting from the expected main effect of attraction, the counselor-accomplices could exercise individual effects in performing their positive and negative roles. Mean scores on the measure of the S's liking for the counselor vary accordingly: counselor No. 1 = 7.33; counselor No. 2 = 8.66; counselor No. 3 = 7.50. Apparently counselor No. 2 was more able to elicit higher ratings from his S's, possibly by presenting himself in a manner that increased the S's attraction to him. In any case, the S's of counselor No. 2 make more change in topic preferences when they respond under order No. 2.

Discussion

The major finding of the experiment suggests that any S's responses to his counselor-accomplice's influence attempt depend both upon his attraction toward the counselor and on the extent to which the counselor's discussion topic expectations are congruent with his own. As such, this finding lends some support to Newcomb's (1953, 1961) and Sampson and Insko's (1964) propositions concerning the relationship between cognitive balance and interpersonal behavior. It also points to these two conditions as likely events of the counseling situation which can interact to affect the stability of a developing relationship (cf. Lennard and Bernstein, 1960).

While there is little agreement among investigators about the specific conditions under which communication discrepancy is associated with behavior change (cf. McGuire, 1966), in this research evidence was found that more change in S's topic preferences occurs when the counselor's own preferences are

more rather than less discrepant from the S's. Even so, balance theory does not anticipate the amount of change that occurred under the topic discrepancy/negative attraction condition (i.e., a mean of 14). Nor does it account for the finding that change was also associated with a significant counselor and order interaction. These latter results imply that in a situation where one participant is seen as possessing more expertise than the other (cf. Aronson, Turner, & Carlsmith, 1963), more change will occur perhaps because the participant with less expertise is confronted by a credible, even though disliked, communicator. In any case, to be even more directly helpful to the investigation and practice of counseling, balance theory notions about the conditions associated with attitude change as a resonse to interpersonal influence need greater explication; e.g., to encompass the effects of communicator differences generally, communicator credibility specifically, and measurement presentation order.

The responsiveness of the Ss to the manipulation of the attraction variable was evident in the results of this study as indicated by its effects upon all the dependent measures. It is clear that the S's liking for his counselor-accomplice was associated more with the positive than with the negative conditions, and this finding validates the check made on the counselor's confirmation of the attraction set during the interview. This overall effect was augmented considerably, however, for those Ss who responded to counselor No. 2, and, more particularly, when the response to counselor No. 2 was made prior to the final topic preference assignments.

Because scores on the procedural check measure of S's liking for the counselor were, by themselves, adequate to discriminate between Ss in the two attraction groups (as well as among Ss in the three counselor-accomplice groups), a measure of the adequacy of the laboratory relationship in the S's view can

be obtained in a relatively straightforward manner it seems. And the extent to which interpersonal attraction is related to an actual client's view of the "adequacy" of the help-giving relationship has been demonstrated by Goldstein (1962, 1965).

The experiment supports the idea of counseling as a social influence process by demonstrating the clear relevance of theory and empirical findings from social psychology to counseling research and practice (Goldstein, 1966). Because Ss were members of a population that is seen frequently in counseling, and because the situation was made to correspond with that defined as psychological treatment (cf. Pepinsky, 1966), which itself corresponds to a variety of events in everyday life, the results offer considerable generality. In addition, three actual counselors were used and carefully trained as accomplices to ensure greater control over possible variation in their behavior so that the S's behavior could be more systematically influenced and observed. Hence the finding that the counselor-accomplices, while acting to confirm the experimentally induced sets of positive and negative attraction, still exercised individual effects has added to the external validity of the study.

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Footnotes

[1]This study is based in part on the author's Ph.D. disseration in Counseling Psychology at the Ohio State University. The research was partically supported under a grant from the University's Mershon Social Sciences Program.

[2]Thanks are due to Dr. Charles E. Hall of the Computation Sciences Division at Educational Testing Service for his assistance with the statistical analysis of the data.

[3]Differences between S's initial and final ranks were determined and then subtracted from a constant of 20 which represents no change. Therefore, the lower the mean, the greater the change.

Table 1

Experimental and Control Manipulations and N's

Discussion Topic Similarity	N = 36
Discussion Topic Discrepancy	N = 36
Positive Attraction	N = 36
Negative Attraction	N = 36
Counselor-accomplices	
No. 1	N = 24
No. 2	N = 24
No. 3	N = 24
Presentation Order of Dependent Measures	
No. 1: Where the S responded first to the topic preference list and second to the counselor evaluation scales	N = 36
No. 2: Presentation Order Reversed	N = 36

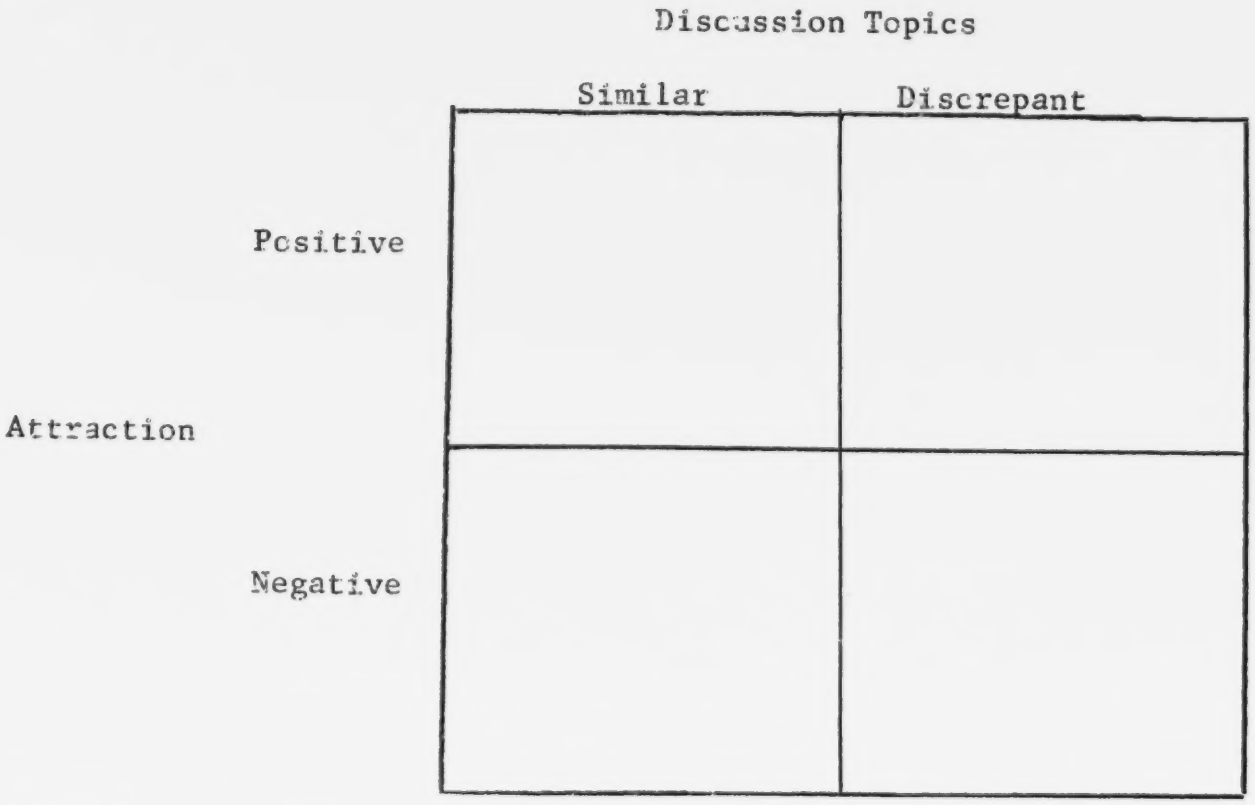

Table 2
Significant Multivariate and Univariate Effects, and Principal Component Coefficients from Analyses 1 through 4

	Multivariate F	df	p less than	Principal Component Coefficients and Univariate F's: Amount of Change	Direction of change	Willingness	Helpfulness	Liking for counselor	df
Analysis 1									
Topics x Attraction x Counselors x Order	2.050	10,88	.037	.570 F=2.872 p<.066	.722 F=5.252 p<.009	.233 F= .575 p<.567	.213 F= .636 p<.534	.149 F=1.167 p<.320	2,48
Analysis 2				.957		-.156	-.291	-.069	
Topic x Attraction	7.480	4,44	.001	F=29.248 p< .001	*	F= .777 p<.383	F=2.701 p<.107	F= .153 p<.698	1,47
				.961		.321	.173	.333	
Counselors x Order	2.713	8,88	.010	F= 7.562 p< .001	*	F= .870 p<.426	F= .541 p<.111	F=2.948 p<.062	2,47
Analysis 3						.475	.929	.665	
Topic x Order	2.964	3,44	.042	*	*	F=2.095 p<.155	F=8.019 p<.007	F=4.113 p<.048	1,46
						.670	.571	.971	
Attraction	51.328	3,44	.001	*	*	F=72.239 p< .001	F=50.681 p< .001	F=151.916 p< .001	1,46
						.225	.687	.820	
Counselors	2.850	6,88	.014	*	*	F= .522 p< .597	F=4.361 p<.018	F=5.647 p<.006	2,46
Analysis 4									
						.547		.992	
Attraction	25.099	2,44	.001	*	*	F=15.347 p< .001	*	F=50.514 p< .001	1,45

*Included as a covariate.